

Back Again, Back Again: Hamartia.

Abigail: Hello hello! Before we begin today's episode, I have a listener limerick for Eloise. If you, too, would like to support the show and receive a silly little limerick about an (arguably pg-13) topic of your choice, you, too, can go to ko-fi.com/backagainpodcast - or, if you'd like to see all of BABA's behind-the-scenes content, you could check out our [patreon!](#)

This limerick is for Eloise, about talking horses.

*I know of one thing irrevocably real
Sly talking horses sure love to steal
In a rich dude's old house
They never do grouse
But instead rob the silver with zeal*

Thank you so much for your support. I hope this month sees you better, dear one.

And now - onto the episode :)

[**FX:** voices chatter in the background. Music begins, a simple repeating pattern, bright and cheery. It is "Nightingales" by Pierce Murphy.]

Abigail, as the intro: Back Again, Back Again, episode one:
Hamartia.

[**FX:** Music fades out. A click of a cassette tape-style recorder turns on, and the machine begins to whirr underneath the rest of the audio.]

Ilyaas: There's a Greek word - *hamartia*. It's - a fatal flaw. If you lived a thousand lives where you started over and came into this world anew, your *hamartia* is the thing that you would fall upon every single time. For some people, it's pride, or the inability to see things in anything but black and white, or the fear of losing what you have keeping you from pursuing anything more. For others, it's always having to be right, or always having to have the last word, or never being able to speak up when it's needed most.

Mine would be this, across a thousand lifetimes in Rhysea: I could never let go of Cassian. Make us kings. Put us on opposite sides of the war. Make us common people, neighbors, make us commanders of opposing armies, make us two storm clouds on opposite horizons or birds or trees or people of any sort, of any form, and there would never not be a lifetime where I wouldn't be drawn to him.

Self-destructive and stupid as it might have been. Despite the thousand thousand things he did against me and against Rhia and against Rhysea, against the people, the entire body of people, the thousands and thousands that could have had a better

life - the parts of him that stick in my brain the longest are the moments of love. The blurry, rachously joyful ones. The soft, barely-in-focus ones.

My head on his chest. The two of us dancing on the roof. Looking up at him, half-drunk, the night before everything went to hell, his arm slung around my shoulders and his chest pressed into my back.

Mine would be this, across a thousand lifetimes in Rhysea: I can't stop loving the people I once did.

It's not a matter of not knowing how to give up. It's not a matter of only seeing the good in people. It's about being selfish and wanting things to remain as they are. For the people I love to stay by my side, to follow me anywhere, to change at the same rates as I do and grow into the same shapes that I take and for them to know my mind without my saying much at all.

And once I find a taste of that, I refuse to acknowledge that I've lost it. Even when it's - obvious - that I'm never getting them back.

Even when it's - obvious - that I'm never going back.

It's been - almost two years? I applied for university because it was expected of me. I spent hours sitting in front of a word document that was completely blank save for the admissions prompt copy/pasted across the top:

Describe a situation in which you enacted change from within your community. Describe a situation where you confronted someone about an issue you cared about. Tell us about yourself in three hundred words. What would you name as your greatest accomplishment to date? Where do you see yourself in twenty years?

Write a new ending to a nursery rhyme. Write about a teacher that changed your worldview. Who do you look up to most in this world? Why do you deserve to pay so much to be here?

How do I say - I don't know? I don't know? I don't know? I don't think I do. I don't think you'd look at any of my experiences and view them as anything other than a fantasy.

Because - how much I wish I could give up on the fantasy of somewhere better. Something better. How much I wish I could draft up a normal response to where do you see yourself in twenty years that did not spiral into thousands of hopes for Rhysea and my quiet return or end after one word: dead.

How much I wish I could convince myself that I'm not going home.

I filled out application essays. I walked the stage at graduation. I accepted admissions at a school far, far away to study linguistics or creative writing or some - languages - if nothing else, learning Rhysean gave me that much. That passion.

But that's still me holding on.

Because, god, I am trying to hold on. I keep a journal in Rhysean, but I can feel myself losing more of it with every breath I take. What happens if you don't speak a language every day? What happens if you have no one to speak it with? What happens if there are no resources, no online dictionaries, no places where you can go to look up a word or a verb tense or a usage?

It's just - gone. You forget a word, it's just - gone. For good.

But I'm rambling. This is a new space for me, and I haven't figured out how to fill it yet with words in a way that makes sense. That hasn't stopped me from decorating this tiny little apartment like I'm in Rhysea, though, from buying yards of gauze-y lace to make a canopy and hanging dried flowers and bits of parchments covered in every memory I have, every word I can think of before it leaves my brain forever - but it's stark in my very being here, that it's so *not* the place I'm trying to make it.

I've lost a bit more of myself, but still I'm holding on.

[**FX:** The whirr of the cassette machine fades out. "Nightingales" once more fades in, just as cheerfully.]

Abigail, as the outro: Back Again, Back Again is written and produced by me, Abigail Eliza. If you're enjoying the show,

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I hope you have a wonderful day.